

Parliament representing that Party. There is a tremendous responsibility which comes with that power. We feel that this Bill is the place to flash some signals across the country that that responsibility will be picked up, that in fact this Government will take the direction that people have asked it to take to encourage Canadian investment, to give them a sense of confidence about their future with a commitment to Canadianization.

We strongly urge the House to accept the amendment that we have moved. It will take us to the commitments for the future that will give us the jobs which we so desperately need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this debate on Bill C-15, and especially to speak to the amendments before the House today, which you so graciously read from the Chair.

At this time, one of the points that concerns us particularly about Bill C-15 is how the review agency will be managed and directed under the new legislation, and especially the relationships between the public servants that belong to the agency and the Minister and the Minister's office.

First of all, I would like to explain our basic position, which is that we think the Minister should have the responsibility, and be free, to issue guidelines regarding the agency's policy. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you will find this position surprising, coming from us. Although we do not always agree with the positions taken by the Minister in this area, we realize that the Minister must be responsible for issuing guidelines on the review agency's major policies. That responsibility is incumbent on all Members of Cabinet, who were elected to provide policy direction to the Government's various agencies.

However, we believe that the Minister should moderate his involvement in day-to-day administration and the various decisions that will be taken by his officials. In other words, we consider that the political role and the administrative role should be kept separate. Unfortunately, the amendment that specifically concerns Clause 4 was voted down in committee by Progressive Conservative Members on the committee. We do not know why, and we find it rather surprising. Are Progressive Conservative Members opposed to the Minister providing policy direction? That would hardly make sense. But then, why did the Progressive Conservative members object? What bothers us, and that is perhaps why the Conservative Members objected to this amendment, is that we feel the Minister should not be involved in the decision-making for each specific case. In other words, the Foreign Investment Review Agency should not be an extension of the Minister's Office and his staff. We would like individual decisions on applications for foreign investment in Canada to be based on objective criteria, on criteria we would like to know and see tabled before the House or before a committee of the House, for consideration by Hon. Members.

Investment Canada Act

We would like to see decisions on each application for foreign investment based on criteria that, first of all, would indicate which areas of Canada's economy should be protected. We are thinking of areas such as culture and the financial sector, where the Government should think twice before letting foreign investors purchase Canadian companies or create new ones in this country with funds brought in from outside.

We would like to see objective criteria describing the areas in which investment should be encouraged, for instance, investments that would directly create jobs. Perhaps such criteria should also include encouraging investment that is likely to create jobs indirectly through spinoffs, and through other industries that would be providing services or raw materials, for instance, to a company that itself will be creating jobs as a result of foreign investment.

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We believe that those criteria must attest to the importance of scientific research in Canada and that we must stand squarely behind companies which will be created here through foreign investments and which will be primarily research-oriented. We also want a series of objective criteria based on factors such as those I am referring to. For instance, will a new business set up by foreign investors promote the development of new technologies in Canada?

Those are, in fact, the basic points to be considered with respect to the objective criteria which public servants will be expected to apply without ministerial intervention in every case, for we want public servants to be able to work without unending political interference in each case. We fully agree that the review agency should be given general guidelines by Cabinet and the Minister responsible—how else could it work?—but we do not want each decision to be subject to political input.

What guidelines have been given so far to the screening agency by the Minister? We simply have no idea at all. Not a word has been said about it in the House of Commons, perhaps excepting the only general Canada-is-open-for-business directive to encourage foreign investment. To this day, we still have no idea what course the Government will want the review agency to steer.

Such are the questions we are directing to the Department and, hopefully, the answers will be somewhat more enlightening than what we heard so far. As a matter of fact, the series of amendments under consideration will provide the Cabinet spokesman with an opportunity to come up with the answers to some of our questions.

In addition, I would urge the Government to be more specific and to elaborate on the general guidelines to be given the agency, and to tell us the nature of the objective criteria which agency officials will use in their day-to-day decisions on approval of foreign investments proposed by others.